

March, it has been clear that the left's definition of the word is evolving faster than even some Democrats can actually keep up with. Medicaid expansion is now infrastructure, paid leave is now infrastructure, and job-killing tax increases to hold the assortment all together.

At every step of the way, Republicans have focused on targeted investments in roads, bridges, airports, waterways, and broadband infrastructure the American people actually need.

But yesterday, President Biden showed that his patience for the smart, bipartisan approach was wearing thin. He directed Democratic leaders in Congress to get ready to ram through more expansive, unrelated spending unilaterally.

Meanwhile, Senator CAPITO and our colleagues on the EPW Committee continue to demonstrate that bipartisan infrastructure investment is actually still within reach.

In April, the Senate passed their water infrastructure bill by a count of 89 to 2. And just a couple weeks ago, the committee reported out a historic investment to surface transportation, and they did it unanimously. It is disappointing that President Biden has been unwilling to follow the Senate's productive example.

And now some of our colleagues have signaled that they intend to use this month to depart from that example, themselves. The Democratic leader has laid out a partisan agenda he seems to hope will illustrate that the Senate is somehow broken.

Remember, the Senate is 50-50—50-50. The American people did not hand the Democrats a mandate in the Senate. This series of radical proposals has no chance of becoming law, but every intention of justifying reckless changes to the way the body actually operates—plans to jam hospitals, schools, and small businesses with new high-stakes tests of “wokeness,” to dramatically curtail Americans’ right to keep and bear arms, and, of course, to tip the scales of our electoral system permanently in their favor.

Yesterday, the radical parade began with an attempt to use the cause of paycheck fairness as cover for placing unprecedented new legal burdens on American employers. Wage discrimination on the basis of sex has been illegal for 60 years. Wage discrimination on the basis of sex has been illegal for 60 years. What Democrats proposed yesterday was to kick down carefully constructed protections to leave even the smallest American business at risk of unlimited liability in workplace cases—listen to this—even where malice plays no part. Their bill would force workers to opt out of, rather than into, class-action suits—in other words, a gift-wrapped bonanza for the trial bar. Unsurprisingly, that gambit not only failed to pass; it failed to even unite a majority of the Senate.

So if our colleagues intended to actually earn support for consensus steps

on paycheck fairness, they might have considered subjecting their proposal to scrutiny through the normal legislative process—perhaps a markup or even a committee hearing.

Well, apparently when your agenda is designed to fail, regular order is just a waste of time.

FOREIGN POLICY

Mr. President, now on an entirely different matter, I have been outspoken on the importance of sustaining America's support for local partners who are leading counterterrorism efforts in Afghanistan and elsewhere, even when doing so has put me at odds with the Presidents, actually, of both parties.

When the previous administration considered precipitous withdrawals from Afghanistan and Syria, I sponsored a bipartisan amendment warning that doing so could “allow terrorists to regroup . . . to the detriment of United States interests and those of our allies.”

Dozens of Senate Democrats joined the measure at that point.

Last year, the Congress overrode veto threats and put explicit restrictions and reporting requirements on force drawdowns in the annual Defense authorization act. I and others voted to override the veto of a Republican President. The goal wasn't to tie the hands of the Commander in Chief. It was to force the administration to seriously address the risks to U.S. interests posed by any potential withdrawal.

But this spring, when President Biden announced his intention to abandon the battlefield in Afghanistan completely—completely—without a plan, there was a bit less outrage, for some reason, on the Democratic side of the aisle.

And yesterday, the President moved to waive the NDAA requirements that Senate Democrats themselves had supported in order to proceed with this misguided retreat.

The White House has yet to address the obvious risks of our departure: that the Taliban will regain control, al-Qaida will return to strength, and the people of Afghanistan—particularly, women and girls—will suffer.

We don't have to wait long for these fears to prove prescient. The Taliban has wasted no time in ramping up its campaign to drag more of the country back under its oppressive medieval rule—more killing of soldiers, journalists, and activists; more oppression of women; and more ambitious operational goals.

As one Taliban commander put it, “when we arrive in Kabul, we will arrive as conquerors.” Well, they are inching closer every day while we withdraw, and this is all happening, as I just indicated, before our retreat is even complete.

Experts are still unsure just how quickly the Taliban's resurgence will accelerate as we depart. That is bad news for our partners in Kabul. It is bad news for the Afghan military,

which is losing its edge without coalition support on the ground. And it is especially bad news for Afghanistan's women and girls. I know many of my colleagues share my concern for our partners in Afghanistan and for the many Afghan women who have reclaimed so much of their freedom since 2001. So make no mistake, their future will be imperiled under Taliban rule.

Rhetorical support for Senate resolutions and hollow promises of assistance from afar might ease our consciences somewhat, but they cannot take the place of the coalition forces in supporting our partners and vulnerable populations in Afghanistan. That won't prevent the resurgence of al-Qaida, with whom a recent United Nations report found Taliban militants “show no indication of breaking ties.”

So where is the plan? Where is the plan to deal with these challenges as we abandon our partners and leave them to the Taliban?

How does the administration intend to combat terror or support Afghan forces if we are hundreds of miles away? How does it intend to counter the negative influence of Russia, China, Pakistan, Iran, and others who might see our departure as massive opportunity? Have we learned nothing from Russia's intervention in Syria?

So later this week, President Biden will meet in person with leaders of our NATO allies, many of whom have expressed concerns about the risks of a precipitous withdrawal from Afghanistan. But, of course, as we withdraw, they will, as well, because without us there won't be a NATO presence in Afghanistan.

So for the sake of American security and the strength of our partnerships, it is time for the President to finally offer some clear answers to advance our shared interest in combating terrorists who still mean us harm and to restore faith in our resolve to finish things that we start.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CYBERSECURITY

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, last week, we learned that global meat processing company JBS, one of the four meatpacking companies responsible for more than 80 percent of beef processing operations, had suffered a ransomware attack. The attack temporarily shuttered the company's U.S. beef plants, threatening the beef supply and leaving ranchers wondering once again whether they would be able to sell their cattle.

The JBS attack highlights two important issues. The first is cyber security. The rise of ransomware attacks